May/June 1995 Volume 20, Number 3

A summary of recent news stories from the University of California San Francisco

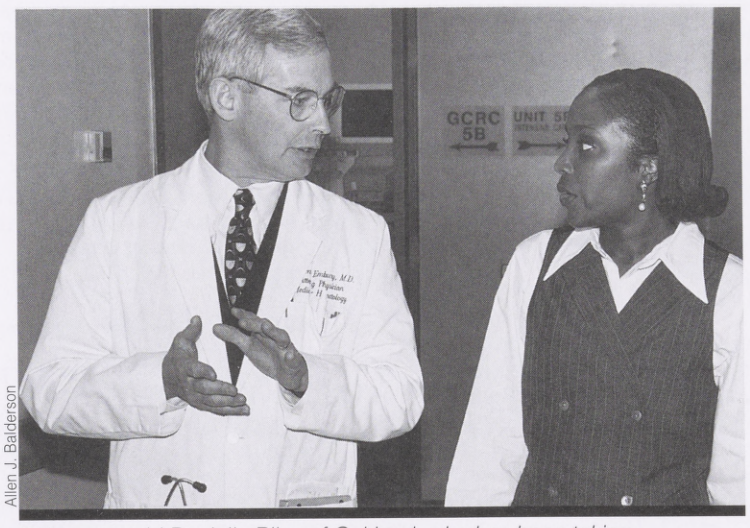
UCSF

To Our Neighbors

A breakthrough in sickle cell disease

There may be new hope for patients suffering from sickle cell disease. Twelve patients at the Northern California Sickle Cell Center, based at SFGH, have completed participation in a multi-center clinical trial that was halted in late January — four months early — by the National Institutes of Health because the results were so compelling.

The trial involved use of the drug hydroxyurea to treat 299 adult sickle cell patients around the country. Patients taking the drug had half the number of pain episodes and hospitalizations for pain as patients on placebo. According to the NIH results, patients on the drug required fewer blood transfusions and had significantly fewer bouts of acute chest syndrome, a life-threatening complication of the disease.



Allen J. Balderson

Thirty-year-old Danielle Riley of Oakland, who has been taking hydroxyurea for the past three years, and hasn't been hospitalized since last June, arrives at SFGH to meet with Stephen Embury, left.

"This is the first agent that has been shown to directly improve the welfare of sickle cell patients," says Stephen Embury, MD, professor of medicine at SFGH and an investigator in the national trial. It's taken 85 years to find an effective therapy that can be given to sickle cell patients, according to the Sickle Cell Disease Scientific Research Group at NIH.

The NIH has issued a medical alert to physicians to make them aware of the study results. Hydroxyurea has been used for years as an anti-cancer drug and "is one of the safer chemotherapeutic agents we have available - one of the least toxic," Embury says. Sickle cell disease is an inherited condition striking one in every 400 African Americans, as well as people of Middle Eastern, Mediterranean and East Indian ancestry.

"We are emphasizing that the study showed a beneficial effect and no short-term complications in adult patients with frequent pain," Embury says. "We can say nothing about long-term side effects." For further information, call the Northern California Sickle Cell Center at 206-5169.

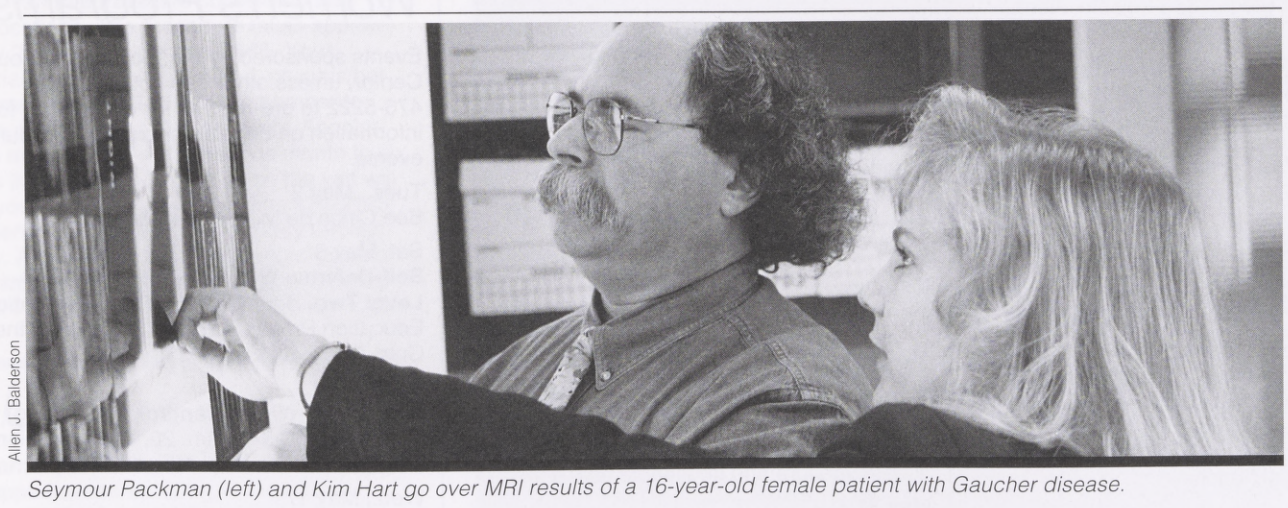
Trial starts for improved hip prosthesis

UCSF physicians are beginning a new hip prosthesis trial, the results of which could mean helping many of the 120,000 people every year in this country who need hip replacements.

Led by James O. Johnston, MD, the researchers have developed a new system which produces a tight bond between the bone and the prosthesis. The device has a spring-loading collar, which pushes against the bone to create a very tiny electric shock that stimulates bone growth.

This is an improvement over the older hip prosthesis method, which incorporates a shiny stainless steel and titanium substitute to be mounted on the bone. Unfortunately, in 5 to 10 years, more than 10,000 patients with this kind of surgery need to have it redone — not because the original surgery was flawed, but because the unavoidable stress on the hip as the patient moves around leads to "mechanical failure" when the implant comes loose.

Although a successful trial of a new hip prosthesis will benefit anyone who needs the surgery, Johnston currently is focusing on those under 40 who need joint replacement. Hip replacement is more common in the elderly, but younger people sometimes need the surgery due to accidents, cancer and other diseases. For further information call 476-3036 or 476-2495.



Allen J. Balderson

Seymour Packman (left) and Kim Hart go over MRI results of a 16-year-old female patient with Gaucher disease.

New center treats Gaucher disease

UCSF has opened a new Gaucher Disease Referral Center specializing in this inherited disorder common in the Jewish population, particularly of Eastern European origin (Ashkenazi). It is the most common genetic disease in this population affecting up to one in 600 people.

Supported in part by the Genzyme Corporation, the Center provides a comprehensive program for the diagnosis, treatment and management of the disease, as well as genetic counseling for patients and their families.

Pediatrician Seymour Packman, MD, is medical director of the new Center. Kim Hart, MS, serves as the genetics counselor.

Gaucher disease is caused by low levels of a key enzyme — glucocerebrosidase — which is needed to break down a fatty substance in cells. The deficiency causes the substance to collect in scavenger cells, particularly in the spleen, liver, and bone marrow. Symptoms include an enlarged spleen and liver, anemia, severe bone pain, bone fractures, easy bleeding and bruising, and chronic fatigue.

A major advance in treatment, and one that has been highly successful and safe in the vast majority of patients, is the process of giving back to the patient the enzyme that is missing, which is known as enzyme replacement therapy. For more information, call 1-800-901-9997.

In Brief

UCSF revises plan for Laurel Heights building

UCSF's Laurel Heights building will become an important center for the study of health policy, aging, and other social and behavioral sciences under a revised plan for the building, according to Chancellor Joseph B. Martin, MD, PhD.

Under the revised five-year plan, UCSF proposes to relocate administrative offices and office-based instruction and research programs which do not require biomedical laboratories to the building, located at 3333 California Street. The resulting center will bring together researchers from a wide range of disciplines who study ways to modify group or individual behaviors to bring about health promotion, better compliance with medical treatment, or improved quality of life.

AIDS Health Project moves

The AIDS Health Project has moved from 18th and Folsom to 400 Castro Street in the old Bank of America building. Anyone with HIV disease may make an appointment to discuss their needs and concerns, to learn about the psychosocial support services available, and to obtain referrals if necessary. Hours are weekdays, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For further information, call 476-3902.

Volunteers needed for the Healing Garden

Do you like to work in a garden and at the same time want to help people battling cancer? The Healing Garden at the outpatient UCSF/Mount Zion Cancer Center needs you. Volunteers are needed to do preliminary gardening work at the UCSF/Mount Zion site, 2356 Sutter Street, on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month through June, 1 to 4 pm. For interested persons who do not have time to do volunteer gardening but would still like to help the project through donations, there's a much needed wish list for everything from gardening tools to certain plants, bulbs and seeds. To volunteer or make a donation call 885-3693.

Women sought for three contraception trials

Women interested in new forms of contraception are being sought for three clinical trials now underway in the Department of Ob/Gyn and Reproductive Sciences at SFGH. The first is a six-month paid study using a small vaginal ring that contains the same hormones as birth control pills. In a separate, one- to three-year trial, volunteers will receive a low-dose birth control pill that does not contain experimental hormones. Women will receive free birth control, routine gynecologic care as well as payment for participating. The last study involves use of RU-486 as a form of emergency, post-coital contraception. Women who qualify will be given the drug within five days of unprotected intercourse to avoid unwanted pregnancy. For further information on any of the above studies, call 206-6400.

More news for you

on the back page

What's happening

To Our Neighbors
May/June 1995
A bimonthly calen
events at UC San

Special Events

Tues., May 2 & Wed., May 3
Fifth Annual Student Art Show. Sponsored by Millberry Arts & Performances. Millberry Conference Cntr., 500 Parnassus. Noon-6 p.m. Opening reception at 4 p.m. on Tues., May 2.

Sun., May 7-Fri., May 19
The Festival of Active Living '95. Programs for older adults on health care, future planning and housing. Co-sponsored by UCSF/Mount Zion Center on Aging and Jewish Community Cntr. Call 292-1266 for a brochure.

Wed., May 10
United We Dance Benefit. UCSF/Mount Zion Auxiliary hosts a dinner followed by a San Francisco Ballet performance honoring the 50th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter. Proceeds benefit UCSF/ Mount Zion Cancer Center. $125/$160/$200. Green Rm., Veterans Bldg., 401 Van Ness. 6 p.m. Call 885-7354 for reservations.

Fri., May 12
Poets on Parnassus: Something About Men. Open reading of poetry on men's issues. Sponsored by Millberry Arts & Performances. Toland Hall, 533 Parnassus. 4:30 p.m.

Sat., May 13
Women in Midlife: A Celebration. Symposium on women and power, intimacy, menopause, cancer and more. Sponsored by Dept. Psychiatry. Miyako Hotel, 1625 Post St. 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Call 476-7521.

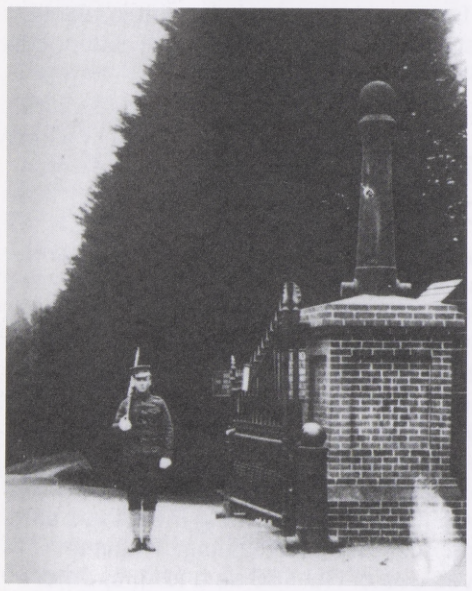
Sat., May 20
UCSF Orchestra Concert. (See Asian Pacific American Celebration.)

Wed. & Thurs., May 31 & June 1
Hospitals Auxiliary Fine Jewelry Sale. Benefits patients at Medical Center. Medical Sciences lobby, 513 Parnassus. 7 a.m.-4 p.m.

Cinco de Mayo Celebration

Call 476-2010 for complete schedule of events.

Tues., May 2
The Taco Bell Rings for Racism: Some Wary Words for Cinco de Mayo 1995. Co-sponsored by Women's Resource Cntr., Latin American Campus Assn. and Chicano Medical Student Assn. Toland Hall, 533 Parnassus. Noon-1 p.m.



Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Park Archives

Wed., May 3
Highlights of the Presidio and SF's History. A Brown Bag Lecture sponsored by Public Service Programs. Rm. 300, Health Sciences West, enter through 513 Parnassus. Noon.

Cancer Referral Hotline

The UCSF Cancer Referral Service enables cancer patients to place just one telephone call and learn the names of UCSF doctors specializing in the kind of treatment they need. Call 1-800/888-8664.

Primary Care Hotline

Do you need help choosing a primary care physician at the UCSF Medical Center? Get personalized assistance to help you make a choice to suit your personal preferences and geographic needs. Physicians are available at UCSF Medical Center, UCSF/Mount Zion and the practices at Lakeshore and Daly City. Call 885-7777 weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Campus Tours

All tours are free and begin at 1 p.m. on Fridays. Meet in the Medical Sciences Bldg. lobby, 513 Parnassus. Sponsored by Public Service Programs. Call 476-4394.

Asian Pacific American Week

Events co-sponsored by the Asian Pacific Systemwide Alliance and those listed below. Call 476-2675 for complete schedule.

Mon., May 15
Yan Can Cook. Toland Hall, 533 Parnassus. Noon.

Tues., May 16
Keynote Address. Ed Lee, San Francisco Human Rights Commission. Toland Hall, 533 Parnassus. Noon-1:30 p.m.

Wed., May 17
Building a Community Media Voice. A Brown Bag Lecture co-sponsored by Public Service Programs. Rm. 300, Health Sciences West, enter through 513 Parnassus. Noon.

Slammin' & Jammin' in the '90s with Christy Medrano. Filipino comedianne preceded by dance troupe Mind Over Matter. Co-sponsored by Women's Resource Cntr. $5. Cole Hall, enter through 513 Parnassus. 7 p.m. Call 476-5222.

Thurs., May 18
Cultural Festival. Features the Red Panda Acrobats and Spirit of Polynesia, arts and crafts and food. Millberry Gym, 500 Parnassus. 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Thurs. & Fri., May 18 & 19
To Live. (See Cole Hall Cinema.)

Fri., May 19
Filipino Festival. Millberry Conference Cntr., 500 Parnassus. Noon.

Asian Pacific American Celebration. Mission Center Bldg., 1855 Folsom. Noon.

Sat., May 20
UCSF Orchestra Spring Concert. Works by Chen Yi, Gang Situ, Beethoven and Hindemith. Co-sponsored by Chancellor's Endowment Fund. Free for UCSF students/ $3 UCSF staff/$5 general. Knuth Hall, SF State Univ. 8 p.m. Call 476-6761.

Recreation & Fitness

Millberry Fitness Center has over 100 recreation and fitness classes, including children's summer day and theater camps, painting, dance, Feldenkrais, Kindergymusic, Aikido and much more. Call 476-1115 for a complete class schedule.

UCSF/Mount Zion Care Account

If you are thinking of switching Medicare supplemental insurance plans or choosing a supplemental policy, attend a free lecture on **Tues., May 16,** from 10-11:30 a.m. or **Thurs., June 1,** from 2-3:30 p.m. to find out about important changes relating to Medicare. The Mount Zion Care Account is a free membership program providing discounted health care services for qualifying adults ages 65 and older. Sponsored by UCSF/Mount Zion Center on Aging. Rm. 552, 5 North, UCSF/ Mount Zion, 1600 Divisadero. Call 750-4125 for a reservation and information.

Outdoors Unlimited

Outdoors Unlimited is a cooperative resource center for outdoor recreation and adventure, serving both the UCSF campus and the general public. New location: basement of the UCSF Library, 530 Parnassus. Call 476-2078 for a free brochure.

Wed., June 14-Tues., June 20
Summer Equipment Sale. 40%-60% off local retail for sleeping bags, tents, stoves and much more. UCSF Library basement, 530 Parnassus. Call 476-2078.

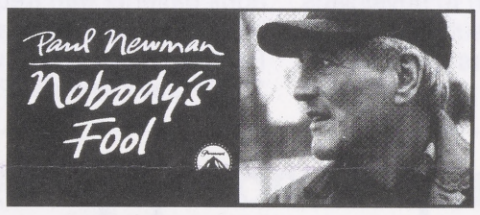
Cole Hall Cinema

Films are shown on Thursdays and Fridays in Cole Hall, enter through 513 Parnassus. Prices run $2 to $3.50. Sponsored by Millberry Arts & Performances. Call 476-2542 for April shows. (Movies subject to change.)

May 4 at 5:45 & 8 p.m.
May 5 at 6:30 & 8:45 p.m.
Before Sunrise

May 11 at 5:30 & 9 p.m.
May 12 at 6 & and 9:30 p.m.
Hoop Dreams

May 18 at 5:45 & 8:30 p.m.
May 19 at 6:30 & and 9:15 p.m.
To Live. (Also see Asian Pacific American Celebration events.)



June 1 at 5:45 & 8:15 p.m.
June 2 at 6:30 & and 9 p.m.
Nobody's Fool

Brown Bag Lectures

Free lectures held weekly at noon on Wednesdays in Rm. 300, Health Sciences West, enter through 513 Parnassus (P); monthly on Thursdays in Rm. 125, UCSF/ Mission Center Building (MCB), 1855 Folsom St.; and monthly on Tuesdays in Herbst Hall, UCSF/Mount Zion (MZ), 1600 Divisadero. Sponsored by Public Service Programs. Call 476-4394.

May 3
See Cinco de Mayo Celebration. (P)

May 10
Wrinkles: Their Cause and Prevention. (P)

May 16
Sleep Disorders in a 24-Hour Society. (MCB)

May 17
See Asian Pacific American celebration. (P)

May 18
Don't Burn Out: We Need Your Fire. Learn to set limits, to say "no" and to cope with overload. (MZ)

May 24
Deadly Consumer Products. Survey of consumer product poisonings due to unintentional exposure and household use. (P)

May 31
Breast Cancer Update 1995. (P)

June 7
It's All in the Swing. Improve your golf game. (P)

June 14
HIV & Your Dentist. (P)

June 15
Preventing Computer-Related Injuries. (MCB)

June 20
Procrastination: An Ineffective Solution to Fear. (MZ)

June 21
When is Joint Pain Due to Arthritis? (P)

June 28
Therapeutic Value of Pets. (P)

At the Heart of It

At the Heart of It, a cardiac support group for heart patients experiencing fear, anxiety, confusion & stress, is facilitated by a cardiac social worker and a registered nurse. Meets at UCSF/Mount Zion, 1600 Divisadero. For further information call 885-7227.

Senior Lecture Series

UCSF Medical Group/Seniority Plus presents the following free lectures on Mondays at 10 a.m. Call 476-0373 for more information.

May 8
Memory and Aging. Lakeside Presbyterian Church, 19th Ave. & Eucalyptus.

June 12
Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care: Who Will Decide When You Can't? Herbst Hall, UCSF/Mount Zion, 1600 Divisadero.

Mount Zion Community Meetings

An ongoing series of meetings to keep the community apprised of activities of interest and to listen to neighborhood concerns. Next meeting: **Tues., May 23.** Executive Board Rm., 2nd fl., UCSF/Mount Zion, 1600 Divisadero. 7 p.m. Call 476-3206.

Art Exhibits

Through Wed., May 31
Costume Designs by Warren Travis. On display at the Faculty/Alumni House, 745 Parnassus. Open weekdays or by appointment. Call 476-4723.

Hospitals Auxiliary Art Exhibit. On display in the lobby of Moffitt/Long Hospitals, 505 Parnassus, through Tues., May 30, will be prints by Hideo Yoshida. On display Tues., May 30, through Mon., June 26, will be work by printmakers Alice Gibbon, Sara Morris and Tak Kanehira. A portion of all proceeds benefits patients at the Medical Center at UCSF. To purchase or reserve work, call 476-4906.

Women's Programs

Events sponsored by the Women's Resource Center, unless otherwise noted. Call 476-5222 to pre-register for workshops, for information on ongoing groups and for June events.

Tues., May 2
See Cinco de Mayo Celebration

Sat, May 6
Self-Defense Workshop for Women — Level Two. Sponsored by Rape Prevention Education Project. $25/$50. Millberry Fitness Cntr., 500 Parnassus. 1:30-5:30 p.m.

Sat., May 13
Workshop: Writing (and/or Illustrating) for Children. $30-$40. Rm. 20, Medical Sciences Bldg., 513 Parnassus. 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Wed., May 17
See Asian Pacific American Celebration

Sat., May 20
Workshop: Women and Money. $40. Rm. 20, Medical Sciences Bldg., 513 Parnassus. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Sun., May 21
Creative Survival: A Ceremony of Memory. This workshop explores the secret lives of women through improvisational theater, dream-gazing, gossip, storytelling and text. $60. Millberry Fitness Cntr., 500 Parnassus. 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

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Institute of Healing Arts & Sciences

A series of free talks and workshops on various alternatives in health care and healing. Talks held on Fridays at noon in Rm. 721, Nursing Bldg., enter through 521 Parnassus. Call 330-5353 for complete information and a schedule of workshops.

May 5
How to Make "Hate" a Friend. Discover how to transform hidden hate from childhood into love.

May 12
Fasting for Health and Rejuvenation.

May 19
Orthomocular and Health Medicine. Learn to understand and appreciate nutrition science.

June 2
Theory and Practice of Naturopathy "Vitalism." Learn to stimulate healing.

June 16
Recognizing Co-Dependent Dynamics.

June 23
Anger is OK. Learn to transform your relationship with your emotions.

June 30
Spiritual Healing Demonstration.

Multiple Helpers Outreach Network Support Group. For victims & survivors of violent trauma. Ages 15 & over. Meets on Tuesdays from 10 a.m.-noon and on Wednesdays from 1-3 p.m. in Rm. A222, Langley Porter Psychiatric Institute, 401 Parnassus; and from 7-10 p.m. in Rm. 517, Nursing Bldg., enter through 521 Parnassus. For further information call the helpline at 759-7923, 7 a.m.-10 p.m. daily.

Breast Cancer Screening

Women can have low-cost mammograms — X-rays to screen for breast cancer — from a mobile van that travels to convenient Bay Area locations. The procedure takes approximately 20 minutes and costs $65. Your physician's approval is required, plus his/her full name, address & telephone number to assure results are mailed promptly. Appointments must be made at least one month to six weeks in advance. Find out when the van will be in your neighborhood by calling 476-2193 between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., Monday through Friday. A $65 mammography screening also is available at the UCSF/Mount Zion Medical Center Radiology Department. Call 885-7465.

Volunteer Orientation

Program to acquaint prospective volunteers with opportunities available in the Medical Center at UCSF in Langley Porter Psychiatric Institute Auditorium, 401 Parnassus, and at UCSF/Mount Zion in Herbst Hall, 1600 Divisadero. For dates and times of Parnassus orientations call 476-1196. Call 885-7353 for UCSF/Mount Zion orientation schedule.

UCSF

University of California San Francisco
Public Affairs
3333 California Street, Suite 103
San Francisco, CA 94143-0462

He felt dizzy and weird, but now he just feels lucky.

When Gerard talks, his friends listen.

And they listen with amazement. After suffering a stroke just six months ago, Gerard Donohoe lost his ability to speak. "I knew what I wanted to say, but when the words came out of my mouth, they were gibberish," he recalls.

Today, he can hold a lengthy conversation without stumbling over a single word. Speech and other therapy at the UCSF Stroke Service helped get Gerard back on the verbal track. If he wants, he can return to his work in advertising and sales, where a gift for dialogue is crucial.

Gerard, 72, was stricken last November, while on his way to UCSF for his regular doctor's visit. He remembers feeling "dizzy and weird," but somehow he managed to drive home, park his car, and get help from a friend. "He could not understand a word I was saying, but he knew I was in trouble."

Gerard was rushed to the UCSF Emergency Department, where doctors had to ascertain quickly whether he was suffering from a brain hemorrhage — a break in a vessel, possibly triggering bleeding in the brain — or ischemic stroke, caused by insufficient blood flow to the brain. The symptoms are similar, but Gerard's case was complicated by the fact that he was already taking medication to keep his blood from clotting. The drugs were prescribed after he had double coronary artery bypass surgery at UCSF in 1991, when a mechanical heart valve was implanted. While anticoagulants may prevent clogging of arteries and vessels, they also can accelerate bleeding. If Gerard had a brain hemorrhage he could have been in grave danger. On the other hand, if a blood clot caused his stroke more anticoagulants would be needed to prevent further damage.

"We needed to know right away whether to thicken or thin his blood," says neurologist Wade Smith, MD, assistant director of the UCSF Stroke Service.

A CT scan revealed no hemorrhage, and doctors determined that a blood clot probably dislodged from the mechanical heart valve and settled in a brain blood vessel. The clot blocked the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the brain, causing Gerard's stroke. When the vital supply of blood and oxygen is cut off, brain cells and tissue die within minutes, resulting in the loss of mental functions. In Gerard's case, the area of his brain controlling speech took the major hit.

Gerard was hospitalized for four days. Another anticoagulant was administered intravenously to prevent any more blood clots from forming. A Doppler ultrasound procedure, which relays images to a TV-size monitor, allowed doctors to view and track blood flow through the main arteries to the brain. It showed smooth sailing, with nothing obstructing the course.

Gerard's first days after the stroke, however, were difficult. Although he is an avid reader, when a hospital visitor brought him a newspaper he could not even interpret a headline. But, by the time he was ready to leave, he had regained nearly all his physical and mental abilities. "He had a dramatic speech problem," says Smith. "He spoke, but he didn't make sense." Twice a week sessions for two months with speech therapist Jillian Chelson at UCSF/Mount Zion has taken care of that. He again is articulate and fluent.

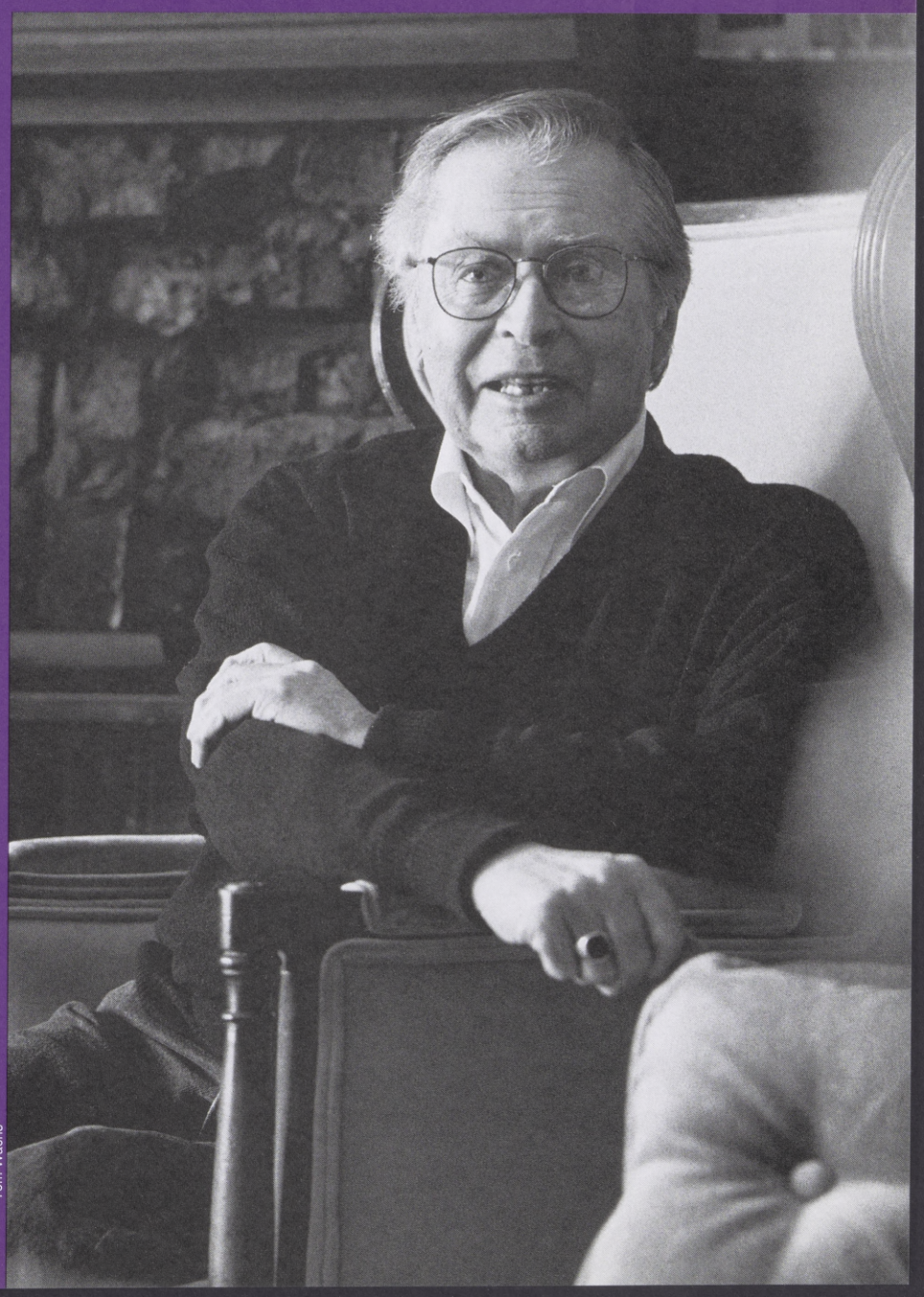
Gerard is very lucky. More than half a million people in the US suffer a stroke each year, and of those who survive, most are left with a permanent disability, such as loss of movement, mental abilities or speech. Once the stroke has wreaked havoc in the brain, the goal of the Stroke Service is to stem further harm. It offers comprehensive and personalized care, including the latest treatments, rehabilitation for stroke sufferers, and assessment for those at risk.

Gerard also is back to regular exercise sessions at the Cardiac Rehabilitation Program at UCSF/Mount Zion, which he had been attending since his 1991 heart surgery. He is driving his car again, and he spends most of his time enjoying his favorite pastimes — cooking and reading. Every once in a while he might feel guilty about forgetting something, but he is reminded that memory lapses are normal for people of all ages. For now, he has decided to take it easy, and perhaps take a long vacation, something he has not done in nearly 15 years.

Gerard understands that he is still at risk for stroke. His age, history of heart disease, and now stroke keep him on the candidate's list. But he is better educated about the warning signs — sudden blurred vision, loss of sensation in an arm, leg or the face, dizziness or imbalance, and, of course, difficulty speaking. He's been there before, and he knows where to go for help.

— Andy Evangelista

(For more information, call the UCSF Stroke Service at 476-7489.)



Tom Wachs

May/June 1995

To Our Neighbors

Drug seen as a breakthrough in sickle cell disease

Center specializes in disorder common in Jewish population

New state-of-the-art eye service for common vision problems

University of California San Francisco
3333 California Street, San Francisco, CA 94143-0462

To Our Neighbors

A new Refractive Surgery Service for eye disorders

A new Refractive Surgery Service at UCSF's Beckman Vision Center can help people with such common vision problems as nearsightedness (myopia), farsightedness (hyperopia), and astigmatism to reduce or eliminate their dependence on glasses or contact lenses.

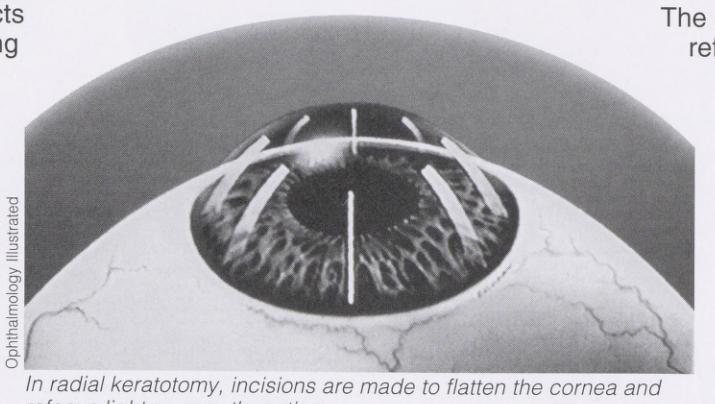
"There is an expanding menu of choices for surgical correction of these disorders," says corneal specialist David G. Hwang, MD, who directs the new service. Hwang is joined by corneal specialist John Stanley, MD. Other medical staff are expected to be added shortly. The service will offer both standard and investigative treatments.

Patients with refractive errors have blurred or distorted vision, caused by a problem in the eye's shape, which prevents it from correctly bending and focusing light. Approximately 70 million people suffer from myopia, the most common refractive disorder.

Although vision correction surgery is performed with great precision, individual variations in response mean that a perfect 20/20 result cannot be guaranteed, according to Hwang. Nevertheless, the overall results can be quite impressive. Depending on the refractive error and the technique used, surgery can achieve results of 20/40 (required to obtain a driver's license) or better in approximately 90% of patients. If additional correction is desired, glasses or contact lenses can generally be worn after surgery.

Surgery is appropriate for patients with stable vision ranging in age from the mid-20s to mid-60s. All refractive eye surgeries are done on an outpatient basis using highly effective anesthetic eye drops. Patients are in most cases able to return to work within a few days.

The most widely known refractive surgical procedure is called radial keratotomy (RK). The procedure has enjoyed a surge in popularity in the past five years, according to Hwang, with improved techniques and better patient selection. It is estimated that in 1995 approximately 250,000 RKs will be performed in the U.S.



Ophthalmology Illustrated

In radial keratotomy, incisions are made to flatten the cornea and refocus light rays on the retina.

During the procedure, four to eight incisions are made in the peripheral cornea to flatten it and refocus light rays on the retina. Ophthalmologists use detailed computer maps of the cornea and statistical formulas called nomograms to determine the optimal placement and number of incisions for each individual. Vision generally stabilizes in several weeks following RK, and patients are able to resume normal activities within a day or two.

For information on the new service, call 476-5021.

Alzheimer's studies

Two studies are being conducted by the Center for Clinical and Aging Services Research of the UCSF/Mount Zion Center on Aging to better understand and treat Alzheimer's disease. The first is an experimental drug — physostigmine — that has been shown to improve memory and enhance cognitive function. The second is a non-drug study to chart changes in short-term memory. For further information, call Meryl Brod, MD, or Laura Sands, MD, at 750-4170.

Fatigue study at VAMC

Researchers at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center's Magnetic Resonance Unit are seeking healthy, non-smoking, sedentary men and women between the ages of 25 and 55 to serve as control subjects for a study examining muscle fatigue in people with multiple sclerosis. Volunteers must be free from heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and neurologic disorders. Studies will take place primarily at the VAMC. Subject payment is available. For more information, call Alex Ng, PhD, at 751-9741.

Adult asthma sufferer?

If you have adult asthma with symptoms of gastroesophageal reflux (heartburn, regurgitation), you may be eligible to volunteer for a clinical study to evaluate the effects of a potent acid suppression drug. For further information, call Kenneth McQuaid, MD, or Richard Sperling, MD, at 750-2105.